NATURE, ENVIRONMENT, AND EMPIRE

Spring 2008      Professor Harriet Ritvo
Tuesday 9-12

Subject Description

An exploration of the relationship between the study of natural history, both domestic and exotic, by Europeans and Americans, and concrete exploitation of the natural world, focusing on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Books

The following books (all paperbacks) are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore and on the internet, as well as in the MIT Library. Readings not contained in these books will be available on the class website or on reserve.

Kay Anderson, Race and the Crisis of Humanism (UCL)
Charles Darwin, Voyage of the Beagle (Modern Library)
Richard Grove, Green Imperialism (Cambridge)
Elinor Melville, Plague of Sheep (Cambridge)
E. C. Pielou, After the Ice Age (Chicago)
Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes (Routledge)
John F. Richards, The Unending Frontier (California)
Martin Rudwick, Scenes from Deep Time (Chicago)
Nancy Leys Stepan, Picturing Tropical Nature (Reaktion)
George Stocking, Victorian Anthropology (Free Press)
Sheldon Watts, Epidemics and History (Yale)

Assignments

A research paper of at least 25 pages will be due at the end of the semester. A topic proposal will be due in class on February 23 and a progress report will be due in class on April 6. All stages will be presented orally as well as in writing. In addition, each week two students will introduce the discussion of the readings.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

February 5      Introduction

February 12      Charles Darwin, Voyage of the Beagle
R. D. Keynes, ed., Charles Darwin’s Beagle Diary, esp. 351-64

Suggested additional reading:
Janet Browne, Darwin: Voyaging, chs. 7-14
Adrian Desmond and James Moore, Darwin, chs. 8-13

February 19 No Class (Monday Schedule)

February 26 Pielou, After the Ice Age, especially 5-38, 61-80, 99-101, 107-115, 125-128, 227-312
Rudwick, Scenes from Deep Time
Paper proposals due

March 4 Richards, Unending Frontier

March 11 Grove, Green Imperialism, especially 1-152, 309-486
Drayton, Nature's Government

March 18 Melville, Plague of Sheep
Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, Iberian Colonial Science, Isis, 2005, 96:64-70

March 25 NO CLASS--Spring Break

April 1 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 15-143
Stepan, Picturing Tropical Nature
Paper progress reports due

April 8 Stocking, Victorian Anthropology, 46-109, 186-283
Kay Anderson, Race and the Crisis of Humanism

April 15 Watt, Epidemics and History
J. R. McNeill, “Revolutionary Mosquitoes or the Atlantic World: Malaria and Independence in the United States of America,” (in Squatriti, ed.,
Nature’s Past)

April 22  No class—Patriot’s Day

April 29  David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*
M. Gadgil and R. Guha, *This Fissured Land*, ch. 4

May 6  Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 77-156

May 13  Final presentations